

CIVILIAN SECURITY, DEMOCRACY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS



PROMOTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP AND INPUT

The survivor voice is a vital part of establishing effective and comprehensive anti-trafficking strategies that advance prosecution, protection, and prevention efforts. Now more than ever, survivors are leaders in the anti-trafficking movement, whether they run organizations, advocate before legislatures, train law enforcement, engage with the public, or collaborate with governments to improve domestic and foreign programs. Survivors know firsthand what is needed to improve government anti-trafficking responses and their input is key to ensuring anti-trafficking policies reflect perspectives that only those with a lived experience can provide.

For any entity, whether a government, business, or civil society organization, adopting a survivor-informed approach means seeking meaningful input from a diverse community of survivors at each stage of a program or project. This includes a wide range of opportunities, from the initial program development and design stage throughout implementation of the project as well as during any evaluation activities. The United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking—comprising survivor leaders presidentially appointed to advise the Executive Branch on anti-trafficking policies—defined “survivor-informed” in its 2019 annual report as the incorporation of survivor expertise from inception through development and completion of efforts relating to all forms of anti-trafficking work. In particular, governments and organizations should avoid making requests that involve final or close-to-final products, tight time constraints, or other factors that could impair the quality of input and be counter-productive to establishing a truly survivor-informed product.

Entities should take steps to become survivor-informed in all aspects of their anti-trafficking response. The first step is understanding whether and how well an entity seeks and incorporates survivor input, as well as identifying gaps and opportunities to do so effectively.

Knowing how to engage with survivors appropriately and responsibly is also critical to establishing a survivor-informed practice. Engagement should be trauma-informed, which means having an understanding of the physical, social, and emotional impact of trauma on the individual, as well as on the professionals who work with them. Entities should also promote survivor empowerment and self-sufficiency, and consider ways to employ survivors in leadership positions as staff members, consultants, or trainers. Increasing leadership opportunities for survivors is not only an appropriate response to the survivor community, but also provides for greater effectiveness across all efforts to combat human trafficking. Survivors, like any other employee or consultant, should receive financial compensation for their time and expertise. Additionally, survivors should represent diverse perspectives, including experiences of both sex and labor trafficking, as well as across age, gender, race, national origin, and sexual orientation.

Organizations should also seek training on best practices in engaging with survivors and partner with survivor-led organizations and groups that have successful survivor leadership models, including knowledge in the field of professional and leadership development. For example, the Cameroonian NGO, Survivors' Network, has built a unique approach to survivor empowerment by focusing on economic independence and fostering entrepreneurship among women and girls. TIP Report Hero Francisca Awah Mbuli founded this organization and under her leadership, Survivors' Network has helped create economic opportunities for survivors across Cameroon by providing micro-financing to small businesses and income-generating projects as well as job and small business training.

Survivors have worked hard to secure a leadership voice in the anti-trafficking movement. Governments and civil society must prioritize partnerships with survivors that reflect not only positive, but also meaningful engagement that promotes leadership. Survivor voices should be at the core of any comprehensive response to combating human trafficking.



CHECKLIST FOR ESTABLISHING A SURVIVOR-INFORMED PRACTICE:

- Assess the degree to which your organization is survivor-informed
 - » Identify gaps and opportunities
- Provide paid employment opportunities for survivors
 - » Staff positions
 - » Consultants
 - » Trainers
- Seek input from a diverse community of survivors
 - » Both sex and labor trafficking perspectives
 - » Diversity in age, gender, race, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, etc.
- Create a plan for accessing survivor input throughout all stages of a project
 - » Program development and design
 - » Implementation
 - » Evaluation

